

Local Kids Get Tips on Football and Life

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This year's Youth Impact Program sponsored by the NFL Youth Football Fund is being held at Tulane University through Aug. 1. The Youth Impact Program is designed to introduce disadvantaged youth to university life. Boys from the age of 9 through 12 are enrolled in a rigorous program focusing on academics, life skills and athletics. This is the first year that Tulane is home to the innovative program, said Riki Ellison, a 10-year veteran of the NFL.



Boys ages 9-12 are enrolled in a rigorous program focusing on academics, life skills and athletics through the Youth Impact Program on the Tulane uptown campus this summer. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)



The program, founded by Ellison in 2005, offers free participation to more than 100 disadvantaged boys from recovery schools in New Orleans this year.

Guided by Tulane staff, Recovery School District teachers and student athletes from Tulane, participants are learning academics, life skills and how to play football.

The program's unique curriculum balances academics and athletics, stressing the importance of both as means to ensure the disadvantaged participants' future success, Ellison said.

The New Orleans Saints are an integral part of the [Youth Impact Program](#) at Tulane. Participants will be given tours of Saints facilities and the chance to interact with players.

"This is a fantastic program that will give our youth additional opportunities to develop skills to help them to be successful not only in athletics, but in life," said Rita Benson LeBlanc, Saints owner and executive vice president. "The Saints are excited and proud to do our part."

"I am proud of the Youth Impact Program at Tulane and Riki Ellison for his outreach to our community," said Tulane President Scott Cowen. "I believe this will prove to be an effective means of introducing university life to boys and inspiring them to achieve their dreams through a college education."

Sen. David Vitter of Louisiana is a supporter of Youth Impact Program at Tulane. He was with Cowen and Ellison when the idea was first proposed. "I want to thank the

Youth Impact Program and Tulane for bringing this much needed program to our area. I will share this great program with my fellow delegation to make them aware of the impact this program has for the young, prospering 'at risk' boys in our community."

Lindsey Stineman, Tulane's program coordinator, said that Tulane is excited to host this undertaking. "We strive to balance the athletics and the educational objectives of the camp, and we are appreciative of the NFL's support of the program. We also recognize NFL alumnus Riki Ellison for his leadership and love of our kids in the program."

Rick Dickson, athletics director at Tulane, stated, "I am extremely proud that the NFL has selected us to participate in this pilot program. It fits perfectly as one of our first major initiatives of our newly instituted [Devlin Fame S-AFE Center initiatives](#). I'm confident that under Lindsey Stineman's leadership and our student-athletes' and staff's guidance these youngsters will benefit immensely."

Ellison said, "I am a big believer in reaching out to our youth in need and at risk from urban areas throughout our nation. New Orleans is still recovering from the aftermath of Katrina. This, as well as its challenging environment for young boys to succeed in life, offers an opportunity to bring in support from Tulane University, the New Orleans Saints and the NFL to make a permanent impact on these participating young boys."

The Youth Impact Program at Tulane is set up to make a positive and lasting difference in the boys' lives as they develop solid relationships with positive role models in the community in which they live, added Ellison.

Support for the program is provided by the NFL Youth Football Fund and Tulane University. Established in 1998 by the NFL and the NFL Players Association, the NFL Youth Football Fund seeks to use football as a catalyst to promote positive youth development, support youth and high school football needs nationwide and also ensure the health of grassroots football in future generations, according to Ellison.